

## Background and History of the Alfredo Gonzalez Texas State Veterans Home

In September 2002, the City of McAllen proposed a 12-acre tract located at Yuma Avenue and South Cynthia Street as the site for a Texas State Veterans Home.

In January 2003, the Texas Veterans Land Board chose the McAllen site as the location for a future Texas State Veterans Home. It was one of only two sites selected out of 40 proposals from around the state. The most important criteria considered by the Veterans Land Board were:

- The number of veterans over 65 in the service area for the proposed site.
- The distance of the proposed site from an existing Texas State Veterans Home.
- The proximity of the proposed site to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities and services, or the equivalent.

In April 2003, the Veterans Land Board issued an invitation for bids to construct the Texas State Veterans Home in McAllen.

In May 2003, the Veterans Land Board awarded a \$10.3 million contract to Moorhouse Construction, of Harlingen, to construct the home. The total cost to construct, equip and design the home is about \$13 million.

Also that month, the Veterans Land Board voted to name the McAllen home after U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Alfredo "Freddy" Gonzalez, who was killed in action in Vietnam.

Patterson sent more than 107 letters of solicitation seeking nominees for the McAllen home's namesake. The letters were sent to Valley-area veterans organizations, veterans leaders, local elected officials, state representatives and senators, local members of Congress and both U.S. senators from Texas. The naming review committee for the McAllen home received 11 qualified nominees by the April 16 deadline. After carefully reviewing each proposal, the committee presented the name of Sgt. Gonzalez for consideration by the Veterans Land Board.

The naming committee was composed of the state adjutants for the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars, the executive director of the Texas Veterans Commission and three employees of the Texas General Land Office.

The home has 160 beds, of which 60 will be certified for Alzheimer's care in a separate, secured wing. Residents will have a broad spectrum of health care services, a comprehensive rehabilitation program, special diets, recreational activities, social services and a library.

Because the VA subsidizes a significant portion of a veteran's cost to stay in a Texas State Veterans Home, the daily rates are well below market average. A veteran pays about \$63 - \$74 a day for a semi-private room in a Texas State Veterans Home, while the average cost to stay in a Texas nursing home is about \$100 a day.

When it reaches full occupancy, the McAllen veterans home will have about 150 full-time employees and an annual payroll of more than \$3 million.

The members of the Texas Veterans Land Board who chose the McAllen site are: Jerry Patterson, VLB Chairman and Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office; Col. Ladd Pattillo, USAR (Ret.); and Mr. Mike Ussery.

Patterson authored Senate Bill 1060, the legislation that established the Texas State Veterans Homes program while serving as a state senator in 1997.